

VZCZCXR00036

PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHMOS

DE RUEHKUK #0047 0581435

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P R 271435Z FEB 06

FM REO KIRKUK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0537

RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0500

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

RUEHKUK/REO KIRKUK 0564

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIRKUK 000047

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

BAGHDAD FOR POL, ECON, NCT, IRMO, USAI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/27/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: (C) TOZKHURMATO TO JOIN KIRKUK PROVINCE?

REF: KIRKUK 18

CLASSIFIED BY: Scott Dean, Regional Coordinator (Acting), REO  
Kirkuk, DoS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) This is a joint Kirkuk and SET Tikrit cable.

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

¶2. (C) Governor Hamad of Salah ad Din Province says he would not object to Tozhurmato's rejoining Kirkuk province, were residents to favor that in a referendum. By contrast, a Tozhurmato Turcoman strongly opposed the idea the same day with SET. Saddam removed Tozhurmato from Kirkuk province; the Kurds want it back. The KRG has been giving assistance to Salah ad Din province to win support. The Constitution requires a referendum before the end of 2007. Tozhurmato's significant Kurdish population supports joining Kirkuk province and the KRG. Advance acquiescence from the Salah ad Din governor should help that along.

-----  
CONVERSATIONS  
-----

¶3. (C) With SET on February 21, Governor Hamad of Salah ad Din province confirmed that he would not object to Tozhurmato's rejoining Kirkuk province, were residents to favor that in a referendum. This followed February 20 press reports that the governor had made similar remarks to Kirkuk Governor 'Abd-al-Rahman Mustapha. Governor Hamad explained to SET that the people of Tozhurmato were more like those of Kirkuk (read: were Kurds and Turcomans) and would be happier there.

¶4. (C) By contrast, a Turcoman from Tozhurmato, Salah ad Din Provincial Council member Dr. Sami Aria Mohammad, strongly opposed the idea. Sami charged that Kirkuk already was rife with ethnic discrimination and complained that, even without Kurds from Tozhurmato, the Turcoman percentage of Kirkuk province had already declined from 70% in the 1970's to only 50% now because of Arabization. Annexing Tozhurmato would only reduce the Turcoman percentage in Kirkuk province further.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

¶5. (SBU) Tozhurmato's population is predominantly Kurd and Turcoman. Saddam sliced the area off from Kirkuk province and

merged it in 1975 with Tikrit, Balad and Samarra from Baghdad to create Salah ad Din, a new province for his hometown. The Kurds want Tozkhurmato back. As reported reftel, the Kurdish region has been donating assistance to Salah ad Din Province to win political leaders' support for returning Tozkhurmato to Kirkuk province, which Kurds expect in turn to join the Kurdish region.

(KRG authorities are also, for example, donating money for equipment and fuel at Tozkhurmato's biggest business: a state-owned poultry farm.)

¶6. (C) The Salah ad Din Governor's comment is significant. Except for some Kurdish-dominated districts now in Mosul province, Tozkhurmato is the only area Saddam separated from Kirkuk province that is not already in the Kurdistan Region. Internal KRG boundary adjustments to return Kirkuk province to its original boundaries will be easy for the Kurds if both Tozkhurmato and Kirkuk province join the KRG as the Kurds expect.

¶7. (C) The Constitution requires a referendum on disputed territories such as Tozkhurmato by the end of 2007. This being Iraq, we do not yet know if the country will meet that constitutional timeline nor how the results of that referendum will meet the "principle of justice" that the Constitution, through its incorporation of TAL Article 58, also requires in a settlement. When the vote comes, though, Tozkhurmato's significant Kurdish population will almost certainly support joining Kirkuk province and the KRG. Many Arabs and some Turcomans may oppose this unless the Kurds can convince them that life as a minority in Kurdistan will be better than life in Salah ad Din Province. However, advance acquiescence from the Salah ad Din governor to the Kurdish plan should help the KRG to retake Tozkhurmato.

ORESTE